PART I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Boiotian beginnings: the creation of an ethnos

(1) Introduction

'The present Boiotoi' – wrote Thucydides – 'in the sixtieth year after the capture of Ilion, were evicted from Arne by the Thessalians, and settled in what is now called Boiotia, but was formerly named the Kadmeian land: there was, besides, a group of them who were in this land earlier, some of whom had gone to war against Ilion.'[1]

Thucydides' statement has had an inordinate effect on the way historians have looked at Boiotia and the Boiotians. Consciously or not it is accepted that Boiotian history began only with the arrival of the Boiotoi. This is said to have happened around 1150 or 1100 BC.[2] The Bronze Age population is conveniently disposed of by the assumption – often unspoken – that they were driven out, or killed, or caused to waste away and disappear from the face of the earth.

Thucydides was doing only what others had done before him, and would do afterwards, in taking the Trojan War as the beginning of the history of Greece. We need not be bound by the same constraints, and indeed we ought to try to resist them. As far as Boiotia is concerned, for example, we can accept that the palace-centred states at Thebes and Orchomenos collapsed, and that with them went centralized government and all the formal institutions which it supported. On the other hand, it is clear from the evidence of archaeology, dialect, and cult that the land was not utterly depopulated, but that, on the contrary, there remained *in situ* a substantial number of people whose descendants eventually, with the addition of new blood from outside, regrouped and re-emerged from

[1] Thuc. 1.12: Βοιωτοί τε γὰρ οἱ νῦν ἑξηκοστῷ ἔτει μετὰ Ἰλίου ἅλωσιν ἐξ Ἄρνης ἀναστάντες ὑπὸ Θεσσαλῶν τὴν νῦν μὲν Βοιωτίαν, πρότερον δὲ Καδμηΐδα γῆν καλουμένην, ᾤκισαν (ἦν δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ ἀποδασμὸς πρότερον ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ, ἀφ' ὧν καὶ ἐς Ἴλιον ἐστράτευσαν).

[2] For example, García-Ramon 1975: 109 ('*ca.*, 1125: Naissance de la culture submycénienne en Béotie: séparation de proto-béotien et fin de la communauté proto-éolienne'); Buck 1979: 81 (a process beginning 1150–1100, completed by 950).

their own dark age as the Boiotoi whom we know and whom so many of their neighbours were pleased to revile.

Communities, like other living organisms, are born, grow up, mature, age, wither, and die. Only Athena springs fully grown out of her father's head: the rest of us change as time passes. In this chapter I shall consider, in separate sections, the evidence for the early history and development of the Boiotoi as provided by archaeology, by contemporary written documents, by the dialect, by cults, and by social and political institutions. The investigation begins in the Bronze Age and goes up to the end of the sixth century BC. In this way I hope to be able to reconstruct the steps by which the Hellenic ethnos of the Boiotoi was built on the living ruins of its predecessors. I use legendary traditions sparingly, and only where they are reinforced by data of other kinds. They are not a source of the first rank, since each was compiled with a purpose in mind, in order either to explain or justify an existing state of affairs. Cult activity, on the other hand, is much more reliable, since it deals with what people did rather than what they said about themselves, and hoped might be true.

(2) The archaeological record

There were two major centres in Mycenaean Boiotia, Thebes and Orchomenos.[3] At Thebes, on the Kadmeia, there was a palatial complex and a number of dependent buildings. There are traces of fortification walls at vulnerable points of access to the hill. To the north is a prehistoric burial mound, the so-called tomb of Amphion and Zethos, while eastward, on the west bank of the river Ismenos, are two large Bronze Age burial mounds. Other Mycenaean tombs have been found on the Ismenion hill, and in the areas south and south-east of the Kadmeia, south of the main formal entry to it at the Elektran Gates.

Contact with distant regions is reflected in a collection of oriental cylinder seals in a context which suggests that the local wanax, or one of his agents, did a sideline in making copies of imported exotica. Pottery and mural fragments found at Thebes reveal no artistic difference from other Mycenaean sites: it does not follow that there was absolute cultural

[3] The material in this section is drawn largely from Hope Simpson 1981, Fossey 1988 and Farinetti 2011. Frescoes: Immerwahr (2) 1990: 195–6 (Orchomenos), 200–1 (Thebes), 216 note 26 (Gla). Aside from these, the single most striking artistic feature of the Mycenaean period in Boiotia is the series of Late Mycenaean painted larnakes from the Mycenaean cemetery near Tanagra: Immerwahr (2) 1990: 154–8.

identity, as the local wanakes might naturally be expected to engage the same artists as their counterparts further south did.

The Mycenaean inhabitants of Thebes spoke Greek, or at least their scribes did so. The Linear B documents at Thebes reveal the familiar preoccupations with materials and manpower sent into and out of the palatial centre, and one must assume a basic similarity in the social, economic, and military structure. There is, so far, no hint, as there is at Pylos, of any special military dispositions being made to cope with a possible crisis.[4] A large collection of stirrup jars, many inscribed in Linear B with the name and status of their owner, or the person responsible for each, defies satisfactory explanation.[5]

Thebes is unusual among Greek urban sites in that it was a major centre both in the Bronze Age and in the Hellenic period. It therefore offers an unusually good opportunity to evaluate the degree of continuity between the Bronze Age and the Hellenic renaissance.

Orchomenos, in the north-west corner of the Kopais, dominated the whole of this quadrant of Boiotia. Its most striking surviving monument is the tholos tomb called the Treasury of Minyas. Isolated finds of pottery and fresco fragments have been found on the lower slope of the hill into which the tholos tomb was set. From the area of the convent east of the tomb have come numerous mural fragments which represent a walled city under siege. It has been suggested that the Mycenaean palace was built at this site. It may be so, but the proximity of the tholos tomb and the analogy of other Mycenaean palace sites – for example, Thebes, Pylos, Mycenae, Tiryns – as well as the absence to date of a Linear B archive suggest that this was either a burial site or an ancillary building, and that archaeologists might profitably undertake an intensive survey elsewhere in the vicinity, preferably on elevated and more or less sheltered terrain.

The economy of Mycenaean – or Minyan, as it has conventionally been called since Homer – Orchomenos seems to have depended on crops grown in the Kopaïc basin. The Mycenaeans – like their British successors of the nineteenth century AD – constructed a system of hydraulic works to control the waters flowing into the basin in order to render the larger part of it free for cultivation. The canals were directed to a number of swallow holes – *katavothrai* – on the eastern shore and in the north-east corner of the Kopais, which was protected there by the island fortress of Gla, which

[4] See, for example, Chadwick 1976: 173–9.

[5] See the detailed, sceptical, and ultimately pessimistic survey by Raison 1968. For the stirrup jars at Thebes and Orchomenos see Catling and Millett 1969. All but one come from Thebes (the exception Mountjoy 1983: 32.230). The find-spots are uncertain: Raison 1968: 118–20.

was both a control point – since the north-east bay of the Kopais is the only part of the basin not visible from Orchomenos – and a refuge for men and beasts if subjected to harassment, natural or human. In addition it controlled – as it does today – a major north–south land route from the Malian gulf into central Greece. It may be presumed that surplus grain produced was exported in exchange for other goods, some of which came in stirrup jars similar to those found at Thebes: one of these is also inscribed.[6]

There were two large fortified settlements near the south-eastern corner of the Kopais: at Davlosis on the north-west spur of Mount Sphinx, just north of the pass of Onchestos, and south-west of it at Haliartos, which is on a low hill jutting out into the Kopais, at the northern end of a pass leading to the eastern end of the Vale of the Muses at Askra, and from there to the south and the east. Haliartos is also well placed to protect the route along the southern edge of the Kopais. The network formed by the fortified sites of Gla, Davlosis, and Haliartos, if extended south-east to Eutresis, produces a chain of fortifications protecting overland routes which would not be readily defensible directly from either Orchomenos or Thebes. These fortifications were clearly not meant to defend Orchomenos and Thebes from each other. Gla, for example, sits on the western edge of a network of fortifications on the hills above the north-east bay of the Kopais. Access to the site is from the south and south-east, unusual if an anticipated attack were to come from the direction of Thebes. Any threat would have come by sea, from the east and north-east, or even the south. We can assume, I believe, that relations between the régimes of Mycenaean Thebes and Orchomenos were harmonious.

Thebes, Orchomenos, Gla, and Eutresis were abandoned for shorter or longer periods at the end of LH III B. In some cases at least, there are signs of violent destruction, by what cause I hesitate to speculate. The immediate physical aftermath is similar to what is found throughout the Mycenaean world: a severe reduction in the number of nucleated settlements, an apparently late refugee settlement of relatively short duration in the Tanagraia, as if people had been pushed from inland out to the coast. There was no doubt a concomitant falling off of population, but it may be unwise to equate the drop in the number of archaeologically visible settlement sites directly with a drop in actual population.

It may be instructive to compare the fluctuations in the number of settlements in Boiotia with those in Thessaly and Argolo-/Corinthia. Expressed in percentages, and taking LH III as 100 per cent, the figures

[6] For the Mycenaean drainage of the Kopais, see Knauss 1987a.

are: for Boiotia, Sub-Mycenaean 8.5, Protogeometric 21.2, Geometric 59.5, Archaic 80.8. In the north-east Peloponnese the figures are Sub-Mycenaean 8.9, Protogeometric 15.7, Geometric 31.4, Archaic 35.9; while in Thessaly they are Sub-Mycenaean 0, Protogeometric 41.1, Geometric 31.3, Archaic 27.4.

Boiotia shows a steady increase not exactly matched elsewhere, which may mean that there was a fairly general sense of security, and a relatively strong surviving population base combined probably with fairly substantial immigration, especially between Geometric and Archaic. Thessaly is interesting: the severe falling off between Protogeometric and Geometric, which continued into Archaic, suggests that, having once attained a rate of recovery beyond that in the other two regions, the inhabitants of the Thessalian plains may have been unable or unwilling to cohabit peaceably, and that some elements of the population felt constrained to leave.

By the end of the Geometric period, settlement in Boiotia began – as it did elsewhere – to take on the shape it held for the rest of antiquity, with the appearance of the polis. The configuration of settlement, where it can be tested, reveals certain differences from the Bronze Age. For example, in the open plain at the eastern end of the Helikon massif a new large settlement appeared, Thespiai. The establishment of this polis brought with it the downgrading of Thisbe and the temporary end of settlement at Eutresis. In the eastern Kopais, Davlosis was abandoned, and to the north of it Akraiphia emerged. Farther north, Kopai took over from Gla as a settlement site. The abandonment of Gla and Davlosis suggests that the drainage works of Minyan Orchomenos were no longer functioning, the bureaucracy that maintained them having broken down. Indeed, the general fragmentation of the Kopais area is reflected in the relatively large number of independent poleis – eight – which grew up along and near its shores, a large number for such a small area. This is very different from the rest of Boiotia, where there were only five poleis, each with dependent polismata, in an area twice the size of the north-west quadrant of Boiotia.

The rich Archaic cemeteries of Akraiphia, Thebes, Tanagra, and Ritsona reveal the growing prosperity of eastern and central Boiotia, as do the sanctuaries of the Kabiroi west of Thebes, and of Apollo Ptoieus east of Akraiphia. Thebes offers an interesting example of the changed pattern of settlement. The Kadmeia may have continued to be important as a citadel, but the focus of the community was now south-east of it, at the Ismenion and the Herakleion. The major Geometric and Archaic cemeteries at Thebes were as far away from the new areas as possible, north-west of the

Kadmeia. The new Thebans were also completely indifferent to the funereal monuments of the Mycenaean period.

(3) The dialect

The long-held view that the Boiotian dialect was formed from a mixture of North West Greek and Aiolic elements has recently been called into question, particularly as it pertains to 'Aiolic' elements.[7] As far as we are concerned here, it matters little what the antecedents of the form of Greek spoken in Boiotia were. What is important is the very fact that there was a form of Greek which was peculiar to the region which, for most of recorded antiquity, was regarded as 'Boiotia'. There may have been slight regional variations, but by and large the Boiotian dialect was a prominent factor in identifying those who spoke it as Boiotians. Aristophanes, as we know, played on this in *Acharnians* 860–928.[8] This is not to say that dialectal and political boundaries were coterminous: the people of Oropos, for example, spoke a form of Ionic akin to that spoken across the strait in Eretria, and yet for long periods they were Boiotians. On the other hand, the Plataians – politically closer to the Athenians than to their Boiotian neighbours – spoke, or at least wrote, in the Boiotian dialect.

(4) The written record

The written record begins in the Bronze Age, with the stirrup jars from Orchomenos and Thebes, and clay tablets and sealings or nodules carrying Linear B inscriptions found at Thebes. I have already referred to the stirrup jars and their probable significance.

Like many of those found elsewhere, most of the Theban tablets record the dispatch or disbursement of material and persons from an administrative centre to individuals and other places. The nodules have been interpreted as tallies identifying animals sent to Thebes from elsewhere.[9]

Three place names can be identified on the tablets as the destinations of shipments. They are Amaruto, Ramo, and Akiharija or Aikiarija. The first

[7] Vottéro 2006; Parker 2008: 455.
[8] Cf. Pl., *Ph.* 62a. Agatharchides of Knidos tells a story about how Epameinondas claimed – apparently successfully – that a disputed area between Boiotia and Athens, called Sidai, had to be Boiotian because the Boiotian word for pomegranate was σίδα, not ῥόα (Agatharchides, *FGrH/BNJ* 86 F8). The story may be apocryphal, but it illustrates the importance of the dialect as a distinguishing feature of Boiotian identity.
[9] I deal with this subject in Schachter 1996c.

is Amarynthos on Euboia, the second is probably Lamos, known as the name of a river on Mount Helikon. John Chadwick has interpreted the third as /Aigihalia/, and suggested a site on the coast. Amaruto/Amarynthos and the adjectival Ramijo/Lamios also appear on nodules, as does Karuto, which must be Karystos. The presence of two Euboian sites in the documents suggests that /Aigihalia/ on the tablets might refer to another site, in the territory of Eretria, called Aigilea by Herodotos, and referred to in inscriptions by the abbreviation Aigal-.[10]

One nodule refers to a person identified as Teqajo, another to an Autoteqajo, that is, Thebaios and Autothebaios; three of them identify Thebes by name as their destination. The name of Thebes has also been found on a Linear B tablet at Mycenae, and the adjective Thebaia on tablets at Knossos and Pylos; another of the Theban nodules gives Hapaha, that is, /Hapha/ or /Haphai/ as its destination. It can be assumed that /Hapha-i/ was in the neighbourhood of Thebes.

The geographical distribution of the place names on the tablets suggested to John Chadwick that the territory controlled by Mycenaean Thebes extended at least as far as Amarynthos. This would appear to be confirmed by the evidence from the nodules, and, with the addition of Lamos on the west, it may be claimed that Theban territory ran at least from Mount Helikon to Euboia. That is to say, it was considerably greater than the size of the later polis of Thebes.[11]

The tablets record shipments of units of wool to the female servants of one *Marineu – deity or man, it is not certain – at /Aigihalia/; to the female servants of Komaweteja – possibly a goddess; to the Woikos of Potinija, for Era, and for Emaha. One of the nodules records the receipt of a female goat destined for /Hapha-i/.

Although /Marineus/ or /Malineus/ and /Komawenteia/ do not at present admit of fruitful speculation, /Potnia/ is a name familiar from Linear B documents elsewhere. The question about the Theban Potnia is whether she was divine or royal. What makes one lean in the direction of Potnia the goddess is the existence in Hellenic times of a Theban suburb called Potniai, where Demeter and Kore were worshipped. /Hera/ and /Hermeias/, that is, Hermes, are attested in Linear B at other places.

If, as has been suggested, the place Hapha-i is connected with a goddess Haphaia, she would have to be a goddess similar to the Aiginetan Aphaia.

[10] See Del Freo 2009.
[11] B. Sergent would take it further: Sergent 1994, 1997, 1999, 2010. His theories are dealt with by Palaima 2011.

A study of the votive offerings found at her sanctuary on Aigina has shown that Aphaia was a *kourotrophos*: figurines – Mycenaean as well as Hellenic – depict a woman with a babe in arms. This goddess is well known in Hellenic Boiotia under different names, particularly Ino-Leukothea, but also the goddesses at a number of oracular sites around the Kopaïc basin and the mother goddess who shared a sanctuary with the Hero Ptoios outside Akraiphia, and perhaps she was the same as the 'Ptoia' (the Ptoian One) who appears in one of the Linear B tablets from Thebes.[12] She may also lurk behind the Boiotian tendency to locate the births of major deities in Boiotia: Zeus at Chaironeia, Thebes and Plataia, Athena near the Alalkomeneion, Dionysos at Thebes, Apollo at Tegyra, Hermes at Tanagra, Herakles at Thebes.

The two other identifiable deities named on the tablets – Hera and Hermes – were not major cult figures in the Greek polis of Thebes. However, since Hellenic Thebes controlled a much more restricted territory than its Mycenaean predecessor had done, it is permissible to search for the later centres of the cults of Mycenaean Hera and Hermes anywhere within the area controlled or influenced by Mycenaean Thebes. It happens that Hera and Hermes were the major gods of the later poleis of Plataia and Tanagra, respectively. Indeed, the worship of Hera covered almost the whole of southern Boiotia. Hera may be identical with the 'Teleia' who appears in the same Linear B tablet as 'Ptoia'. If this is so, I would interpret 'Teleia' as meaning 'goddess of the τέλη', that is, districts into which this region was divided: the later pan-Boiotian festival of the Daidala would have been an extension of a regional ritual to cover the whole of Boiotia.[13] I therefore suggest that the Hera and Hermes of the Theban tablets were worshipped in the southern and eastern mainland districts of the territory of Mycenaean Thebes, in regions which were later taken over by Plataia and Tanagra.[14]

[12] Av 104 [+] 191 line 2: po-to-a_2-de.
The editors take this and te-re-ja-de in the same line as neuter plurals meaning 'vers les fêtes du Ptoion' and 'vers les fêtes de Héra Teleia', respectively, the latter being a forerunner of the Daidala: see Aravantinos, Godart and Sacconi 2001: 29 and 173–6. I am not entirely certain that the allative '-de' can be used in this way. Perhaps therefore 'to the (goddess) Ptoia/Teleia' or 'to (the sanctuary) of Ptoia/ Teleia'. The result in any case is the same.

[13] See the preceding note. For the possible Bronze Age origin of a division into τέλη see Schachter 2000b: 13–14.

[14] On Hermes as poliouchos of Tanagra, see Chapter 6 (= Schachter 2003b).
Aravantinos, Godart, and Sacconi 2001: 184–94, in their edition of the tablets from the site in Odos Pelopidou, identified the words ma-ka, ko-wa, and o-po-re-i as the names of deities. Furthermore, they argued that they formed a 'trinity' of Μᾶ-Γᾶ, Κόρα, and Ὀπωρεύς. This interpretation has been strongly refuted – see, for example, Duhoux 2002–3, 2005, 2007; Palaima

In general, the evidence from Thebes reveals a familiar situation. Some of the Mycenaean gods were forgotten, others continued to be worshipped, and still other gods were introduced later. What is special about Thebes, however, is that it is possible to identify some specific deities whose worship did not die out during the Dark Ages, and to connect them with cult figures of the Hellenic period. The survival of these gods means that their worshippers also survived on the spot.

Another striking instance of continuity is the very name of Thebes, which we now see was used in the Bronze Age.

The earliest Hellenic Greek document is the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships*. The prominence of the Boiotoi in this piece is usually attributed to the fact that the Achaians set out from a Boiotian port. Here I am concerned with what it tells us about the state of affairs in Boiotia at or near the time of the Greek Renaissance.

One of the remarkable features of the Boiotian section of the *Catalogue* is the density of settlement it reveals. Another is the high degree of political unity. There are twenty-nine sites named, thirty-one if we include the Minyans. Even if we grant that many of these places are either small or

2000–1; and James 2002–3 – and indeed the names are now taken to be those of people rather than gods.

I am reluctant to enter into a debate where I have no particular expertise, and moreover, where extreme positions have been taken. On the one hand, I agree that the three names do not constitute a divine triad, but on the other, I am less certain that they are human rather than divine. Ko-wa is an obvious example. It is also possible to make out a case for ma-ka and o-po-re-i, although I do so with some hesitation:

(1) Ma-ka: perhaps Μάκαρ (masculine or feminine: see Chantraine 1968–80: *s.v.* μάκαρ). Compare the late fifth-century inscription from Thebes: ιαρὸν | Γ[αία]ς [Μα]καίρα|ς Τελεσσφόρο ('sacred property of Blessed Gaia, who brings fruit to perfection': *IG* vii.2452), and Armenidas *FGrH/BNJ* 378 F5 (also late fifth century), from Phot./*Suda s.v.* Μακάρων νῆσος· ἡ ἀκρόπολις τῶν ἐν Βοιωτίαι Θηβῶν τό παλαιόν, ὡς Ἀρμεν<ί>δας ('Island of the Blessed: the original name of the akropolis of Boiotian Thebes, according to Armenidas'). This is tenuous, but not, I think, impossible. I am less uncertain about

(2) O-po-re-i. The original editors compared this to the inscription from Akraiphia (early fifth century) which reads: Κρίτον καὶ Θειόσδοτος τοῖ | Δὶ τόπορεῖ ('Kriton and Theiosdotos, to Zeus Oporeus': *IG* vii.2733). They took this Zeus to be a god of fruitfulness (Ὀπωρεύς), as indeed others before them have done (including myself: Schachter 1981–94: 3:93). T. G. Palaima, in his review of the *editio princeps*, suggested that 'it is reasonable to interpret *o-po-re-i* as an anthroponymic compound of the Mycenaean preverb/preposition *o-pi* and the later Greek word for "mountain" (root **ores*)': Palaima 2000–1: 479. In Palaima 2006: 145 he renders o-po-re-i as 'Surmount'. This has inadvertently opened up a new line of argument: τοϊ Δὶ τὀπόρει of *IG* vii.2733 could mean, not 'to Zeus god of fruitfulness' but rather 'to Zeus on the mountain top'. He would be identical with the mountain Zeus worshipped throughout Hellenic Boiotia as Karaios/Akraios/Hypatos. Consequently, o-po-re-i in the tablets could very well refer to a god, one who inhabited a mountain top, possibly the god later known as Zeus Hypatos, from whom the mountain that looms over the north-eastern end of the Theban plain took its name.